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ABSTRACT

Research on moral development and behavior has traditionally emphasized person related variables such as level or stage of moral reasoning, individual differences in moral traits and dispositions, or past reinforcement history. The effects of context on moral action and decision, in contrast, have received relatively little attention. It is therefore not surprising that little systematic effort has been made to provide a theoretically meaningful account of situation variables, and that even less has been done on accounting for the conjoint effects of both types of variables. This paper describes an approach to moral decision making derived from a rule governed perspective, intended to provide a conceptual framework for accounting for both person and situation effects on moral decision making. According to this approach, moral decisions are influenced by both individual differences in the use of moral rules and principles and complex contextual cues that include type and attributes of situations. Several lines of research supporting this view are described. (Author)

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**Moral Behavior as Rule Governed Behavior:
A Psychosocial Role-Theoretical Approach to Moral Decision Making**

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Abstract

Research on moral development and behavior has traditionally emphasized person related variables such as level or stage of moral reasoning, individual differences in moral traits and dispositions, or past reinforcement history. The effects of context on moral action and decision, in contrast, has received relatively little attention. It is therefore not surprising that little systematic effort has been made to provide a theoretically meaningful account of situation variables, and that even less has been done on accounting for the conjoint effects of both types of variables. This paper describes an approach to moral decision making, derived from a rule governed perspective, intended to provide a conceptual framework for accounting for both person and situation effects on moral decision making. According to this approach, moral decisions are influenced by both individual differences in the use of moral rules and principles and complex contextual cues that include type and attributes of situations. Several lines of research supporting this view are described. Theoretical and metaethical implications are discussed.

Moral Behavior as Rule Governed Behavior:
A Psychosocial Role-Theoretical Approach to Moral Decision Making

Most interesting and important forms of human behavior can be conceptualized as rule governed behavior. Language and law, logic, convention and morality are all forms of rule governed behavior. The notion of human behavior as rule governed behavior is, to borrow a phrase from Stephen Pepper (1972), a "root metaphor". Using this simple but powerful root metaphor as a starting point, this paper will argue that it is possible to develop a psychosocially integrated framework for conceptualizing moral actions and judgments. Within this frame, moral judgments and actions will be conceptualized as prototypical forms of rule governed behavior. This paper will also illustrate how the application of such a rule governed perspective yields some novel and interesting conclusions with respect to several issues central to the literature on morality and moral development.

The first issue is the relative influence of person and situation variables on moral actions and decisions. This paper will argue that despite the preponderance in the current literature of models that emphasize the importance of person variables, the most empirically useful models will prove to be those that provide a theoretically meaningful account of both person and situation variables. The second issue the paper will address concerns the question of ethical universalism versus

relativism and the metaethical implications of a conceptual framework the root metaphor of which is "human behavior as rule governed behavior". With respect to this issue we will argue that the metaethical implications of a rule governed perspective are consistent with certain post-Wittgensteinian and existential developments in philosophy which suggests that moral decisions are profoundly difficult not only because they involve value conflicts but also because they are decisions or judgments for which there are no absolute justifications.

Background

The morality research literature has grown extensively over the last two decades and currently includes a surprisingly diverse array of theoretical orientations. These orientations range from cognitive developmental/structuralist (e.g., Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1932) to biogenetic/trait dispositional (e.g., Hoffman, 1975; Hogan, 1975) and cognitive social learning (e.g., Burton, 1976; Liebert, 1978; Mischel and Mischel, 1976). This diversity is more apparent than real, however, and a more careful examination of the literature suggests that most current orientations share at least one critical feature, namely, a tendency to emphasize or focus on person variables such as level or stage of moral reasoning, moral traits and dispositions, and past reinforcement history. This tendency, it is argued here, is a consequence of the fact that most theoretical orientations share an underlying bias toward a "naive" or "uncritical" individualism. Individualism is the assumption that society is

an aggregate of discrete individuals, each pursuing his own goals, purposes, and interests (Hogan, 1978). Individualism is naive or uncritical when it implicitly assumes that the behavior of individuals can be adequately explained without reference to the influences or effects of society, culture, or context. The significant limitation of uncritical individualism is that it oversimplifies the complex interaction that occurs between the person as moral agent, actor and decision maker and the extensive network of socially defined rules and roles that make up social systems. Models based on uncritical individualism are unable to provide a theoretically meaningful account of the effects of situation variables on moral decision making because they are conceptually limited to person variables.

The social component of morality, however, need not be ignored. Theoretical alternatives to the contemporary bias toward uncritical individualism are clearly possible (cf. Hogan, Emler, and Johnson, 1978). One such approach will be described in the next section. This approach explicitly acknowledges the psychosocial nature of moral decisions and the paradoxical nature of moral decision making processes. The moral decision making process is paradoxical because it involves an antinomy, with the opposing or contradictory poles of the antinomy consisting of self and society. Moral decisions are intentional choices made by self-directed individuals who are ultimately responsible for them. Moral decisions are not on the other hand, devoid of social consequences and cannot be divorced from social context. The paradoxical nature

of the moral decision making process is hence real rather than apparent in that it involves an irreducible dialectic conflict between the individual and society. Conceptual completeness requires that theoretical models recognize the paradoxical nature of moral decisions and be capable of providing an empirically and theoretically meaningful account of both poles of the antinomy (i.e., person and situation variables).

Psychosocial Role Theory

The approach to moral decision making described here, in contrast to that provided by current individualistic orientations, views the individual as a moral agent whose actions and decisions take place within the context of a socially defined system of rules and roles, thereby providing a conceptual framework broad enough to account for the effects of situation as well as person variables. This approach, which will be termed psychosocial role theory, is rooted in a view of human action that draws on three major traditions in contemporary social theory. At a macro-level, it draws on open systems theory (Allport, 1967; Katz and Kahn, 1978). At a more micro-level, the approach draws on traditional role theory, a heuristic whose earliest formulations can be found in the work of Charles Cooley (1902) and George Herbert Mead (1934) and more recently in theorists as diverse as Erikson, Goffman, Parsons, and Sarbin (cf. Erikson, 1950, 1974; Goffman, 1959; Parsons, 1951; Sarbin and Allen, 1968). Finally, at the most basic level, this approach draws on an emerging rule

governed view of social behavior as rule governed behavior (Harre & Secord, 1972; Hogan, 1974; Mischel, 1969; and Peters, 1958).

Psychosocial role theory is a theoretical heuristic that attempts to integrate these three perspectives on human action. Its basic units of analyses are rules, roles, and systems. Within this framework, morality is seen as performing a critical social function (viz., system maintenance and integration) and it is conceptualized as the network of rules that govern relations between individuals within a system. From this perspective, moral dilemmas are viewed as conflicts between rules and roles within systems and moral judgments as decisions concerning the relative priority of moral rules. Moral conduct is conceptualized as behavior consistent (or inconsistent) with those rules. Since conflict between rules within a system is inevitable and since resolutions to rule conflicts are relative to particular systems, moral judgments are, according to this view, difficult decisions whose validity are ultimately indeterminate.

Basic to the approach outlined here are four assumptions about the nature of human action, viz., that human behavior is:

- (a) rule governed in that it conforms to explicit or implicit rules and conventions applicable to particular action situations,
- (b) purposive or intentional in that it takes place within action situations defined by identifiable goals, aims, outcomes or ends,
- (c) anthropomorphic in that human beings are self-directed agents capable of consciously employing a variety of rules, plans, or

strategies in order to achieve self-selected goals, aims, or purposes, and (d) social in that situation specific behavior takes place within a larger context, network, or system of rules that provides an organisational or structural context for specific rule governed actions.

Up to this point psychosocial role theory has been discussed as a theory of human action. Nothing, however, has been said about development. Psychosocial role theory is rooted in an organism/contextualist perspective on human development of which Piagetian cognitive structural theory (Piaget, 1932) provides a classic example. Such a perspective, when applied to the moral decision making process, views the development of moral reasoning as the outcome of an interaction between the individual rule user/follower/maker and the network of rules that constitute the essence of morality (cf. Piaget, 1932).

The next section begins with a discussion of the three most basic concepts of this heuristic--rules, roles, and systems--and uses them as building blocks for developing a view of the nature of morality that is consistent with the approach described here. Sections two and three outline a psychosocial perspective on moral development and the moral decision making process, respectively. Section four briefly summarizes research that provides support for the empirical utility of the approach.

1. Nature of Morality. Open systems theory, applied to social behavior, emphasizes the contrived or constructed nature of social structures (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Katz and Kahn,

1978). Social systems, unlike biological or mechanical systems, do not have a physical structure. As a consequence, social systems do not exist independent of the cognitions, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of the individuals who comprise the systems. In systems theory, social systems are construed as structurally integrated recurring cycles of social events. Central to any enduring social system are specialized subsystems that fulfill critical systems functions (e.g., production, adaptation, integration, maintenance, etc.). Maintenance subsystems serve to maintain system structure. The notion of a social system (i.e., an open-ended, socially constructed, structurally integrated recurring cycle of social events) constitutes the largest operational concept used in the approach described here. Within the frame, the two basic units of social systems are conceptualized as rules and roles. A rule is a guide for conduct or action. A role is a subset of rules applicable to an individual participant in the system (cf. Harre and Secord, 1972). Roles consist of a constellation of rights and obligations as well as specific rules of conduct. The network of reciprocally defined rules and roles, which constitute the micro-elements of the basic structure of social systems, functions to preserve the fabric of interdependent behavior necessary for the accomplishment of system goals.

From such a structural systems perspective, morality can be conceptualized as the network of rules and roles that function to maintain system integration. According to this approach,

morality has both a surface and an underlying or "deep" structure. The surface structure of morality is made up of its "objective" or observable features. These objective features consist of the cyclical sequence of behavioral events that structure the system. Figure 1 presents a schematic diagram of the structure of morality.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The cyclic sequences of actions that make up the surface structure of the moral system are the data of immediate sense experience and by themselves lack conventional meaning. The ongoing series of behavioral events are structured by a complex network of rules that provide the observable behavior with its conventional meaning. The rule system that underlies the ongoing action sequence is, in effect, the system's "deep" structure. As can be seen from the schematic diagram, the underlying structure of morality is defined by: (1) Level I moral rule that prescribe or prohibit specific acts or activities, (2) Level II the reciprocal moral rights that exist between occupants of roles within the system, and (3) Level III the moral principles that underlie the rules and rights. Thus, from a systems structural perspective, a particular act acquires its moral meaning in the context of a complex network of moral rules, rights, and principles that provide the underlying structure for the system.

The metaethical implications of the question of whether the

moral principles that structure moral rule systems are universal and absolute will be addressed more fully later. For our present purposes, the following discussion of the basic principles that structure morality will be based on a modification of an ethical theory proposed by Frankena (1963). This theory recognizes the existence of at least two basic principles of morality, the principle of beneficence or utility and the principle of justice, that provide a rational organizational structure for rules and conventions normally associated with morality. The principle of utility defines an act or action as good if, all things considered, it serves to maximize the total amount of good in the world (i.e., the balance of good over evil). The principle of justice holds that the just distribution of goods (and evils) is itself a good. Frankena (1963, p. 35) terms this ethical position a mixed deontological theory since it recognizes the principle of utility as a valid one, but insists that another principle is required as well. According to this approach, an individual's moral obligation is normally determined by the rules and conventions usually associated with morality; but in cases of conflict between the rules the individual's moral obligation is determined by the rule that best fulfills the joint requirements of utility and justice. The principles of utility and justice are thus viewed as prima facie rather than absolute, and the theory allows that on some occasions justice may take precedence over utility while on other occasions utility may take precedence over justice. The theory further suggests that in some cases it

will be difficult (if not impossible) to determine with certainty which principle should take precedence.

The structural systems perspective used here adds the principle of pragmatism (or instrumentalism) to this basic ethical position. The principle of pragmatism defines an act or activity as good if, all things considered, it is more useful, practical, or efficient relative to alternative act or activities. Instrumentalism is conceptualized as a default principle applicable in those cases where the principles of utility and justice yield no clearly defined course of action.

A structural perspective on morality such as the one we have been describing requires conceptualizing moral principles as *prima facie* and mixed because of the sometimes mutually exclusive tasks that the maintenance subsystem perform within systems. Maintenance subsystems serve to maintain predictability and stability within systems. In order to fulfill this function successfully, maintenance subsystems must: (1) regulate the interpersonal behavior of occupants of roles within the system, and (2) regulate the distribution of resources, rewards, sanctions, duties, and obligations within social systems. Since the achievement of one goal is frequently incompatible with the achievement of the other, conflict is built into the social system.

Thus far we have discussed the nature of morality with an emphasis on the system structural properties of morality. The psychosocial nature of the approach reported here, however, is

based in part on the existence of structural similarities between persons and social systems. More specifically, the approach assumes a structural isomorphism between the basic principles that structure the social component morality and the principles that structure the individual's thinking and reasoning about morality. Psychosocial role theory thus views each individual within a social system as having available a multilevel repertoire of cognitive rule schema, a subset of which are roughly isomorphic with the principles that structure and organize the network of rules and rights that make up the social component of morality. The two systems (i.e., cognitive and social) are conceptualized as only roughly or partially isomorphic in the sense of existing in approximate structural congruence rather than in exact one-to-one correspondence, with individual differences and variations occurring across both systems.

At a cognitive level, very general rule schemata such as justice, utility, and instrumentalism, serve as more than decision criteria; they function more broadly as cognitive structures or schemata (Bartlett, 1932; Piaget, 1936) that organize and unify the person's social knowledge or understanding. These general principles serve two basic cognitive functions: First, they provide the underlying dimensions that structure and order the person's moral rule repertoire; second, they provide the mechanism for resolving conflict within the person's rule repertoire.

2. Moral Development. From a psychosocial role-theoretical perspective, the development of moral reasoning involves developmental changes in the child's thinking about moral rules. These changes take place along three dimensions. The first is the size of the moral rule repertoire, the second is the child's consciousness of the rules, and the third is the structure of the child's repertoire of moral rules.

In terms of size, developmental changes proceeds in a linear fashion along a dimension of few and simple to many and complex. With respect to consciousness of rules, development takes place along a dimension of heteronomy to autonomy and involves three stages (Piaget, 1932). The first stage is an individualistic stage, defined by the instrumental use of rules without a conscious understanding of their obligatory nature. The second stage is one of heteronomy in which the obligatory nature of rules is recognized, but its source is perceived to be external to the child and based on unilateral respect for authority. The third stage is one of autonomy in which rules are viewed as internally obligatory and arising from cooperation and mutual consent.

Moral development also involves structural changes in the child's moral rule repertoire that parallel the three stage changes that take place in consciousness of rules. During the individualistic stage, the basic principle that governs the child's thinking about moral rules is self interest. As egocentrism begins to give away to a more sociocentric

orientation the child enters the heteronomous stage. At this stage the child becomes more capable of considering the viewpoint of others and his/her thinking begins to include a rudimentary sense of justice or fairness. During the heteronomous stage, however, the child externalizes rules and regards them as properties of the external world which act upon him and which he perceives as inflexible and unchanging, much as he perceives the physical world as unchanging. At this stage, the child typically views objective consequence as more important than subjective intention and authority more important than equality or justice. By the third stage, autonomy, the child is fully sociocentric. At the autonomous level the child's egocentrism is moderated by an understanding of the principles of justice and reciprocity as well as a sense of cooperation and mutual consent.

3. Moral Decision Making. The previous sections discussed the nature of morality and moral development from a psychosocial role theoretical perspective; this section will discuss both a typology of moral decisions and a model of the moral decision making process.

Types of Moral Decisions. Although the current literature on moral behavior gives mixed emphasis to the role of moral judgment in moral development (cf., especially, Kohlberg, 1969; Mischel & Mischel, 1976), moral judgment has been generally viewed as a unitary process (cf., Piaget, 1932; Kohlberg, 1969; Mischel & Mischel, 1976). From a systems perspective, however, the two basic functions of the maintenance subsystem (i.e.,

behavioral regulation and resource allocation) require a distinction between two basic types or classes of moral judgments depending upon the type of decision a situation requires. According to this approach, situations involving a moral judgment require either an action decision or a distributive decision. An action decision involves the regulation of behavior and presents the decision maker with a choice between acting or not acting. For example, a decision involving a choice between stealing or not stealing something (or lying or not lying or breaking a promise or not breaking a promise) requires an action decision. Action decisions are expressed in qualitative terms and the judgment usually takes the form of "Should (ought) I (we) do X (or $\sim$ X)", where X is a specific act or activity. Action decisions that are nontrivial involve consequences for self or others.

A distributive decision, on the other hand, involves the allocation of resources and presents the decision maker with a choice between two or more possible distributions of some thing or activity within the system. For example, a decision involving the apportionment, allotment, or distribution of rights and obligations or resources, rewards, or punishment requires a distributive decision. Distributive decisions are expressed quantitatively and the judgment usually takes the form of "How should (ought) I (we) distribute X", where X is a continuous quantity or amount of something or activity.

Action and distributive decisions also differ in the type of

criteria used in the decision making process. Action decisions are teleological in that the consequence of the act tends to serve as decision criteria. Distributive decisions, on the other hand, are deontological in that the relative fairness (in the sense of equality or equity) of the distribution tends to serve as the decision criterion rather than the consequences of the distribution.

A Model of Moral Decision Making. The actual decision processes that underlie the individual's moral judgment can be described by a three stage "successive hurdles" model of moral decision making. This multi-stage model is intended to represent the minimum number of sequential stages needed to arrive at a moral decision. Briefly, the decision stages are: First, the selection and application of the appropriate Level I moral rules; second, a test for conflict between the rule and the appropriate higher order Level II moral right or obligation; third, a test for conflict between the right or obligation and the appropriate higher order Level III moral principle. Figure 2 contains a more detailed flow diagram of the model.

Insert Figure 2 about here

The model assumes the existence of a multi-level repertoire of rules that function as decision criteria during the decision making process. This multi-level rule repertoire is conceptualized as existing in the form of cognitive rule-schema,

and the number and type of rule-schema available during the decision making process is viewed as a function of the individual's socialization experiences. Persons who have had similar socialization experience can be expected to have a similar (though not necessarily the same) rule repertoire. The multistage model described in this section is concerned with a rule repertoire that consists of "moral" rules and this particular subset of rules is viewed as part of a larger set of rules (e.g., social, legal, grammatical, etc.) acquired during the socialization process. As can be seen from the flow diagram, these internalized moral particular subset of rules is viewed as part of a larger set of rules (e.g., social, legal, grammatical, etc.) acquired during the socialization process. As can be seen from the flow diagram, these internalized moral rules are used in a normative mode and serve as decision criteria during the moral decision making process. It can also be seen from Figure 2 that for a particular act or activity to be judged morally obligatory, the rule that prescribes or prohibits it must be consistent with at least one of the general principles of morality, but not necessarily all of them. Further note that the moral principles that serve as final decision criterion are seen as rule selection rules in the sense that they are used to test the appropriateness of Level I and Level II rules and rights. The multistage model also suggests that most moral "decisions" do not involve a moral dilemma, and that those decisions that do involve a "dilemma" concern conflict between moral rules or conventions and "higher

order" moral rights and obligations or moral principles. Further, according to the model, the moral decision making process involves three distinct and sequential stages and a judgment of moral obligation must pass an increasingly more stringent test of generalizability at each successive stage.

4. Research. The research outlined here, which have been reported in more detail elsewhere (cf., Kurtines Note 2) focuses on the interaction between individual moral decision making processes and system/structural features that characterize situations requiring moral decisions. Data are presented on the conjoint effects of three sets of variables on moral decision making: type of situation, attributes of situation, and individual differences in value preference. A psychosocial role-theoretical perspective thus provides a researchable paradigm for dealing with both person and situation determinants of moral choice.

Study 1: Situation Effects on Moral Decision Making

The first research study in the series of three to be reported here was concerned with the effects of situational variables on moral decision making. Previous research has demonstrated the effects of situational factors on dimensions of moral behavior (cf., Mischel, Coates, & Raskoff, 1968). More recent research has focused on the identification of mechanisms by which situational factors affect moral behavior. A recent study by Lynch and Cohen (1978), for example, examined the effect

of three specific aspects of situations (i.e., subjective probability, subjective utility, and salience of consequences) on helping behavior and found that a differential weighted product average model for combining probability and utility best accounted for these situational factors. Building on this research, a study was conducted that extended previous findings by identifying potential mechanisms by which situation factors influence both the selection and use of a decision making criterion. From a psychosocial role-theoretical perspective, situations and persons are linked by the type of decision a situation requires (action or distributive decision) and the type of criterion the person selects (teleological or deontological). This approach further suggests that the criterion used in a particular situation in turn influences the situational attributes evaluated during the decision making process. A teleological principle such as utility is the preferred criterion for situations requiring an action decision and a deontological principle such as justice the preferred criterion in a situation requiring a distributive decision. It was further hypothesized that in situations requiring an action decision, situational factors influence moral decision making by affecting the subjective expected utility (SEU) associated with possible courses of action, and that in situations requiring a distributive decision situational factor influence moral decision making by affecting the subjective expected justness (SEJ) associated with the possible distributions. These hypotheses were

tested in a study involving 58 undergraduate college students. The purpose of this first study was to develop a method for operationalizing the effects of situations on moral decision making and for empirically examining the relationship between type situation and use of moral principle.

The research procedure for this study involved the development of a set of six simulated moral situations. To maximize the structural similarity of the situations, all six situations involved the same three fictional characters. The simulated situations were arranged in a semi-structured format with a separate answer sheet. The answer sheet also contained a summary of the moral principles (i.e., justice, utility, and pragmatism) used for the study. Three of the situations involved an action decision and required the respondents to make a decision about lying, breaking a promise, and stealing. For such action decisions the two possible courses of action (e.g., stealing or not stealing) had possible negative consequences (e.g., getting caught or not getting caught; getting hurt or not getting hurt) for either one of the two principal characters in the story. Negative consequences were used throughout in order to make the situations parallel.

The other three situations involved a distributive decision and required the respondent to make a judgment about the distribution of responsibility, a reward, and a punishment. Each distributive decision situation involved a conflict between the two possible equity criteria, merit and need. The same equity

criteria were used throughout in order to make the situations parallel. Respondents were asked which of the two distributions described in the situations they could choose if they were the main character. For all six situations, respondents were also asked which of the three moral principles (justice, utility, pragmatism) they felt best justified their choice. The order of presentation was alternated by type of decision.

The subjects in the study made a total of 328 decisions, including 161 distributive and 167 action decisions. Analyses of the results revealed highly significant differences in the use of moral principles across all decision situations. The most frequently used principle was justice and the least used was pragmatism. The results obtained when the data were analyzed by type of situation clearly support the hypothesis of the situational specificity of the use of moral principles. For the distributive decisions, the moral principle most frequently preferred was justice while for the action decisions the most frequently preferred criteria were pragmatism followed by utility, both teleological principles.

Study 2: Person Effects on Moral Decision Making

The first study demonstrated that it is possible to operationally define two relatively distinct types of moral decision making situations and that type of situation has a significant effect on the preference for the justificatory use of moral principles. The second study was concerned with the

development of a method for assessing individual differences in the use of moral principles.

As noted earlier, a psychosocial, role-theoretical approach views each individual within a social system as having available a multilevel repertoire of cognitive rule schema that function as decision criteria. Previous research with young children (cf., Kurtines and Pimm, in press; Kurtines, Pimm and Kaplan, note 1; Pimm, Kurtines, and Ruffy, in press) provides empirical support for the development sequence in moral reasoning postulated by Piaget. This data also provides evidence that during the normal course of development most individuals achieve an autonomous level of moral reasoning by the age of twelve (cf., especially, Kurtines, Pimm & Kaplan, note 1). Little data, however, currently exists on individual difference in the use of moral rule schema such as justice and utility in individuals who are functioning effectively at the autonomous level. The second study, which involved 83 undergraduate volunteers, focused on the development of a measure of individual difference rule schema preference.

There presently exists a growing body of research on the role of schema, scripts, and prototypes in the acquisition and application of social knowledge at many different levels (Schank & Abelson, 1977; Wyer, 1980). With few notable exceptions (cf., Markus, 1977), however, individual differences in the use of social schema have been largely ignored (Fiske & Linville, 1980).

Recent research on social knowledge processing suggests that

the availability of well rehearsed schema facilitate the storage and retrieval of social information at various levels (Anderson & Pichert, 1978; Kendzierski, 1980; Wyler, 1980). Building on this research, a Multi-method Concept Assessment Questionnaire (MCAQ) was developed that uses a multi-method technique for assessing individual differences in information processing. The multiple methods include self-report, recognition, and recall, and the general rule schema include justice, utility, and pragmatism. The MCAQ served as a measure of moral value preference for the next study.

Construction of the MCAQ Scales. The first step in the development of the MCAQ was the selection of a set of test stimuli. The stimuli were selected using the following procedure. First, a pool of adjectives describing the concepts of justice, utility, and pragmatism was assembled from the corresponding Thesaurus categories. The number of initial adjectives in each category ranged from 10 to 32. This initial set of adjectives was then reduced to six adjectives per category on the basis of content relevance and face validity. The following are the final set of adjectives selected from each category. Justice (a concern for fairness or justice): just, equitable, impartial, objective, fair, unbiased. Utility (a concern for the welfare of others): kind, considerate, altruistic, unselfish, merciful. Pragmatism (A concern for efficiency or effectiveness): practical, useful, functional, efficient, effective, valuable. These three sets of adjectives

make up the moral value preference component of the MCAQ. Several additional sets of adjectives were assembled from the Adjective Checklist (Gough & Heilbrun, 1965) to provide a means for assessing the influence of both social desirability response set and defensiveness on the Justice, Utility, and Pragmatism Scales. Six of the adjectives were from the ACL Defensiveness (Male) Scale (active, adventurous, courageous, energetic, loyal, resourceful); six from the Defensiveness (Female) Scale (appreciative, calm, conscientious, helpful, pleasant, sincere); and six from the Unfavorable Scale (apathetic, arrogant, careless, foolish, gloomy, rude). The adjectives from the Df(M) and the Df(F) Scales were also from the Favorable Scale of the ACL.

The development of a format for the presentation of the test stimuli involved the construction and pilot evaluation of several experimental forms of the MCAQ. The format used was such that each appearance of the test stimuli presented the subject with a cognitive task. On the basis of pilot data, a decision was made to use a sequence that involved a self-description task, a distractor, a recognition task, a second distractor, and a second recognition task. The next step is the development of the MCAQ consisted of development of a final item format and scoring procedure for the MCAQ (cf., Kurtines, note 2). The final step involved an evaluation of the psychometric properties of the scale.

Psychometric Properties of the MCAG

Reliability. The Alpha coefficient for the Justice Scale was .84, the standardized item Alpha was .87; the Alpha coefficient for the Utility Scale was .70; the standardized item Alpha was .79; the Alpha coefficient for the Pragmatism Scale was .84, the standardized item Alpha was .90, the Alpha coefficient for the Favorable Scale was .76, the standardized item Alpha was .80; the Alpha coefficient for the Unfavorable Scale was .86, the standardized item Alpha was .88.

Other Psychometric Properties. Analyses of the adjusted total indicated that there was a slight tendency for males to score higher in Utility and Pragmatism while females tended to score slightly higher on Justice, Favorable, Unfavorable, verbal ability, and total number of adjectives endorsed. None of the mean differences were statistically significant. Additional analyses were conducted which indicated that Justice and Utility scores are uncorrelated while Pragmatism scores are negatively and significantly correlated with both, $r(83) = -.39, p < .001$ and $r(83) = -.32, p < .003$ respectively; that scores on all three scales are uncorrelated with social desirability and defensiveness; that verbal ability is uncorrelated with Justice scores, slightly, positively, and significantly correlated with Utility Scores, $r(83) = .19, p < .01$, and moderately, negatively, and significantly correlated with scores on the Pragmatism Scale, $r(83) = -.26, p < .007$; and total number of adjectives endorsed is uncorrelated with Justice and Utility but moderately,

positively and significantly correlated with Pragmatism, $r(83) = .27$, $p < .005$.

Overall, the moral value preference component of the MCAQ thus has adequate psychometric properties. First, the two main scales, Justice and Utility, appear to assess uncorrelated dimensions. Second, none of the scales appear to be subject to social desirability response set, defensiveness, sex bias, or the effects of IQ. Finally, all of the scales display adequate reliability.

Study 3: Person and Situation Effects on Moral Decision Making

Building on the two previous studies, the final project in this series was concerned with the conjoint effects of persons and situation variables on moral decision making. This paper has argued that since models which emphasize person variables do not provide an explicit framework capable of accounting for situational/structural variables, the effects of such variables on moral decision making have tended to be either ignored (Piaget, 1932; Kohlberg, 1976) or handled on an ad hoc basis (Mischel and Mischel, 1976). The power of a psychosocially integrated theoretical heuristic, such as the one outlined here, on the other hand, derives in part from its inclusion of a systems perspective (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Social systems are comprised of recurring and interrelated sets of behavioral events. Social systems are thus rooted in interactions between individuals and a systems approach shifts the conceptual focus

from the individual in isolation to the individual within a social context. Situation effects, as a consequence, present no conceptual difficulty; on the contrary, from a systems perspective the effects of situational context are viewed as an integral component of the moral decision making process. The third study, which involved 64 undergraduate student volunteers, examined the conjoint effects of person and situation variables on moral decision making.

The dependent variable for this study was moral choice in the six simulated situations developed previously. The following sets of person and situation variables served as independent variables. Moral Value Preferences. The influence of person factors on moral decision making was assessed using the moral value preference component of MCAQ. The MCAQ was scored for Justice, Utility, and Pragmatism. Attributes of Situations. The influence of situation factors on moral decision making was measured by means of ratings for each of the six hypothetical situations used in Study 1. For the three action decision situations respondents were asked to make subjective ratings on a 100-point scale of the likelihood that the consequence described in the situation would occur and a subjective rating of the severity of the consequence. Similarly, for the distributive judgement situations the respondents were asked to make a subjective rating on a 100-point scale of the relative importance of merit and the relative importance of need as equity criteria in choosing between the two distributions described in the

situations. These ratings served as situation specific measures of Subjective Expected Utility ($SEU = U \times P$) and Subjective Expected Justness ($SEJ = M \times N$). Respondents were also asked which of the two possible courses of action they would choose if they were the main character in the situation.

The relative influence of person and situation factors on moral decision making was analyzed using multiple regression techniques. A multiple regression was conducted for each of the six situations using moral choice as the dependent variable and scores on the MCAQ (Justice, Utility, and Pragmatism) and SEU (Utility, Probability) and SEJ (Merit, Need) as independent variables. All regression analyses yielded significant multiple Rs. More importantly, in each of the six situations, both person factors (i.e., one or more of the Justice, Utility, Pragmatism scales) and situation factors (i.e., one or more of the SEU and SEJ ratings) contributed a significant increment of explained variance to each of the six regression equations. Thus, both person and situation related factors contributed significantly to the explanation of moral choice in all six situations. Multiple regression procedures, however, are asymmetrical and do not provide information regarding incremental increases that are unique to and shared by single variables and set of variables. Since the purpose of the study was to examine the conjoint effects of person and situation factors on moral decision making, the results of the multiple regressions were further analyzed using a procedure for partitioning regression variance reported

by Mood (1971). This method allows for a more symmetrical analysis of the relative contribution of person and situation factors. Regression procedures are asymmetrical because of the sequential order in which the variables are entered into the regression equation. Variance associated with the variable entered first includes not only the explained variance that is unique to that variable, but also the variance that it shares with other variables (Cronkite and Moos, 1978). The procedure described by Mood (1971) makes comparisons of variance more symmetric by partitioning the unique and shared variance accounted for by each variable or combination in the regression equations.

Table 1 presents the results of the regression analyses partitioned into unique and shared variance for the person and situation variables.

Insert Table 1 about here

The most significant findings can be summarized as follows: (a) the total amount of variance that could be explained by both sets of variables varied across all six situations, but was generally high, (b) the total amount of variance shared by both person and situation variables, on the other hand, also varied across all six situations, but was generally low, (c) situation attributes (SEU and SEJ ratings) consistently accounted for a higher proportion of variance than person related factors (Justice,

Utility, and Pragmatism scores), (d) the total amount of variance that could be explained was consistently higher (> 40%) in the distributive decision situations than in the behavioral situations.

Discussion

Theoretical and Empirical Issues

The current literature on morality and moral development is distinguished by its partiality for theoretical models that are uncritically individualistic. This paper has argued that since such models are limited to person variables, they are unable to provide a theoretically meaningful account of the effects of situation variables on moral decision making. One of the purposes of this paper was to demonstrate the empirical feasibility of developing conceptual alternatives to theoretical models that emphasize person variables to neglect of situation or context. The psychosocial role theoretical approach outlined here, which attempts to integrate systems theory and role theory within a rule governed framework, was explicitly designed to provide a theoretical heuristic capable of operationalizing the effects of both person and situation variables. This approach obviously represents only a first approximation of a conceptually adequate model; nonetheless, the research findings resorted here suggest that such an approach has at least three significant conceptual and empirical advantages over more uncritically individualistic approaches. First, a conceptual framework such as psychosocial role theory that allows the integration of both

person and situation variables makes possible the development of explanatory models that are empirically more powerful than models that focus on either person or situation variables. As the data from Study 3 indicates, person and situation variables both contributed uniquely to the explanation of moral choice for all three action decision situations and all three distributive decision situations. Moreover, the total amount of variance that could be explained by the conjoint effects of both sets of variables was generally quite high across all six situations.

Second, the approach provides a coherent framework for deriving procedures for operationalizing both person and situation variables. Using this framework it was possible to make theoretically meaningful distinctions between characteristics of situations (including both types of attributes of situations) as well as derive hypothesis concerning the effects of these situation variables on moral decision making. In addition, it was also possible to derive a theoretically meaningful set of individual difference variables and develop procedures for operationalizing them.

Third, a conceptual framework that is explicitly psychosocial reflects more accurately the full richness and complexity of the issues that define the literature. Although the approach reported here is complex in detail, such complexity is necessary in order to begin to provide an adequate conceptual framework. Moral choices are complex decisions mediated by both individual differences and situational constraints. The advantage

of theoretical simplicity offered by models that are conceptually limited to person variables is gained at the expense of the capability of accounting for the effects of complex contextual cues on moral decisions. The data in Study 3 indicates that very little variance was shared by the person and situation variables, and that the removal of either set of variables would substantially reduce the total amount of variance that could be explained.

Metaethical Issues

The basic thesis of this paper has been that human behavior can be conceptualized as rule governed. Throughout, moral judgments and moral actions have been looked at as paradigmatic forms of such rule governed behavior. The rule governed metaphor, however, is much more powerful and pervasive. It has implications that extend beyond the development of descriptive models of the moral decision making process to the second basic issue that this ^{CHAPTER} chapter addresses: viz., the metaethical implications of a rule governed perspective, and it is important to conclude by noting that the conceptual framework described here has at least three significant metaethical implications, all of which appear to be rooted in the rule governed nature of human behavior and the paradoxical nature of moral decisions.

First, a conceptual framework such as psychosocial role theory that emphasizes the rule governed nature of human behavior is also compelled to recognize the contrived/constructed nature of social organizations. Since the rule governed nature of human

action is fundamentally distinct from the "law governed" behavior of natural phenomena, such a framework serves to restore an element of freedom and creativity to human action and existence. Using linguistic behavior as an example, Steven Toulmin (1969) notes, "in certain crucial respects the rules to which linguistic behavior conform differ from the laws of the physical sciences... The essential mark of rule-conforming behavior lies in the normative force of relevant rules. An agent who recognizes that he is deviating from a rule acknowledges (at any rate *prima facie*) a claim on him to correct his behavior..." (pp. 86-87). Grammatical rules then, like the social and moral rules to which human behavior conforms, are normative in nature and imply standards against which behavior is evaluated. An individual's violation of a rule, consequently, in no way invalidates that rule. No such situation occurs when dealing with purely law governed natural phenomena. Toulmin points out, "...the motion of the perihelion of the planet Mercury was observed, during the nineteenth century, to be deviating from the precise pattern astronomers had expected on the basis of Newton's dynamical theories. Yet scientists did not treat this deviation as a 'failure' or 'mistake' on the part of the planet...It would have been laughable for them to talk of Mercury as 'recognizing' that it was transgressing the 'norm' set by Newtonian law so as to conform more nearly to the norm set by Mercury itself..." (pp. 87-88). This view would thus appear to suggest that human behavior is not subject to a temporally and spatially universal

set of laws from which there can be no deviation. Quite the contrary, human behavior conforms to social and moral rules that, like the social organization that sustain them, are collectively created, self-imposed, and subject to change. Human beings hence not only conform to rules, they are also free to change or create them in a way that physical laws cannot be created or changed.

Freedom, however, has a price. The second metaethical implication of the approach described here is that moral decisions are difficult decisions not only because they are complex, but also because they are decisions for which there is no ultimate or absolute justification. If we acknowledge that we are free to create or change social and moral rules, we also have to acknowledge that such rules are ultimately and profoundly arbitrary. Life is, as Kierkegaard points out, an either/or situation; choice is a fundamental fact of human existence. The dilemma of human existence, however, is that although we cannot avoid making choices, we can never be sure that we have made the right choice—we can never be certain that we have made the right decision. People invent universalethical principles, Kierkegaard observes, to relieve themselves of the responsibility and the agony of choosing, but in the end even universal moral principles can be doubted. This view would thus suggest that, although all social systems share certain structural similarities, and that the rules and principles that structure social systems (i.e., justice, utility, instrumentalism, etc.) will be similar across systems, in the end social systems are themselves contrived and

arbitrary. Hence, although principles such as justice and utility are used to justify moral actions and decision in the day to day conduct of human affairs, the principles themselves are ultimately without justification outside their individual and collective human use. This view would thus suggest that in a profoundly Wittgensteinian sense principles have no meaning or justification apart from the human beings who use them.

The final metaethical implication of this approach is that although moral decisions lack determinate solutions, they nevertheless have to be made. Moreover, although moral decisions can never be completely divorced from the social context within which they are made, moral decisions are in the final analysis made by concrete individuals who bear the responsibility for them. Jean Paul Sartre (1949) manages to capture in drama the dialectic tension that exists between individual and collective moral responsibility as well as the conflict between abstract principles and concrete humanity that occurs in moral decision making. In his play Dirty Hands, which is set against the struggle for political power that took place in Nazi occupied France, Hugo, an intellectual and assassin, has only an abstract conception of human welfare and is willing to sacrifice everything, including the lives of those who stand in his way, for the sake of his principled beliefs. His patron and intended victim, Hoederer, an immeasurably more mature person, has a conception of humanity that is more concrete and realistic. As Hoederer tells Hugo, "You can see for yourself! You don't love

men, Hugo. You love only principles.... And I, I love them as they are. With all their saloperies and their vices.... For me, a man more or less in the world of counts." Thus, in Hugo's view abstract principles are absolute and consequently more important than people. Hoederer, in contrast, places people before principles. Moreover, Hoederer recognizes that he cannot shift the responsibility for his decisions from himself to his principles. On the contrary, he explicitly accepts responsibility for his decisions. "As for me, I have dirty hands. Up to the elbows! I have plunged them into shit and blood. And then? Do you think one can govern innocently?" (pp.224-225).

In a world that frequently places people in situations that require complex and difficult moral decisions we thus conclude that, in the end, the responsibility for moral choices rests with people not systems or principles.

Reference Notes

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THREE STAGE SUCCESSIVE HURDLES MODEL

